

hatred; and find some outlet for their feelings in putting the Muses on bread and water. Equally severe and austere, to take another instance, is Professor Herbert Read, who finds in Jane Austen 'the atmosphere of a marionettes' opera—an atmosphere that explains the charm which Jane Austen undeniably exercises on people whose particular need is to be amused in a recondite way. Such people have a sophisticated love of "mere quaintness", and seek this quality in all the arts.' It is a pity Miss Austen should so fail to amuse Professor Read; for Professor Read might have amused Miss Austen a good deal. Most people, not professional critics, in his position would say: 'I have a blind spot for Jane Austen.' Everybody has blind spots for somebody. But our Torquemadas will hear of no such moderation; and Professor Read, in his *English Prose Style*, from which the above condemnation of Jane Austen comes, orders writers to the block right and left for lapses in their style, with a rigour perhaps slightly excessive in one who can himself write: 'Once started on a trend of close reasoning, even the break of a paragraph may be disconcerting/ Was it Congreve who said?—

Rules for good writing they with pain indite,

Then show us what is bad by what they write.

At all events the strange conclusion of the book: 'In fact, all that is necessary for clear reasoning and good style is personal sincerity', may be thought, as far as reasoning

is concerned, to refute itself.

But that is not the view of Professor Read, 'In case I may be accused', he has written in a more recent work, 'of excessive dogmatism, I would ask: what is a dogma but a plain statement of an axiom, and what is a dogmatist if not a man who takes the fewest words to express his axioms clearly and then to apply them generally?' To which the answer is surely that an axiom means, ordinarily,